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1830
ALBUM VERSES,

WITH A FEW OTHERS.

BY CHARLES LAMB.



LONDON :
EDWARD MOXON, 64, NEW BOND STREET.

1830.

150.

DEDICATION.

To the Publisher.

DEAR MOXON,

I do not know to whom a Dedication of these Trifles is more properly due than to yourself. You suggested the printing of them. You were desirous of exhibiting a specimen of the *manner* in which Publications, entrusted to your future care, would appear. With more propriety, perhaps, the "Christmas," or some other of your own simple, unpretending Compositions, might have served this purpose. But I forget—you have bid a long adieu to the Muses. I had on my hands sundry Copies of Verses written for *Albums*—

Those Books kept by modern young Ladies for show,
Of which their plain Grandmothers nothing did know—

or otherwise floating about in Periodicals; which you

have chosen in this manner to embody. I feel little interest in their publication. They are simply—*Advertisement Verses*.

It is not for me, nor you, to allude in public to the kindness of our honoured Friend, under whose auspices you are become a Bookseller. May that fine-minded Veteran in Verse enjoy life long enough to see his patronage justified! I venture to predict that your habits of industry, and your cheerful spirit, will carry you through the world.

I am, Dear Moxon,

Your Friend and sincere Well-wisher,

CHARLES LAMB.

Enfield, 1st June, 1830.

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Album Verses.

IN THE ALBUM OF A CLERGYMAN'S LADY.

An Album is a Garden, not for show
Planted, but use; where wholesome herbs should grow.
A Cabinet of curious porcelain, where
No fancy enters, but what's rich or rare.
A Chapel, where mere ornamental things
Are pure as crowns of saints, or angels' wings.
A List of living friends; a holier Room
For names of some since mouldering in the tomb,
Whose blooming memories life's cold laws survive;
And, dead elsewhere, they here yet speak, and live.
Such, and so tender, should an Album be;
And, Lady, such I wish this book to thee.

IN THE
AUTOGRAPH BOOK OF MRS. SERGEANT W—.

HAD I a power, Lady, to my will,
You should not want Hand Writings. I would fill
Your leaves with Autographs—resplendent names
Of Knights and Squires of old, and courtly Dames,
Kings, Emperors, Popes. Next under these should stand
The hands of famous Lawyers—a grave band—
Who in their Courts of Law or Equity
Have best upheld Freedom and Property.
These should moot cases in your book, and vie
To shew their reading and their Serjeantry.
But I have none of these ; nor can I send
The notes by Bullen to her Tyrant penn'd
In her authentic hand ; nor in soft hours
Lines writ by Rosamund in Clifford's bowers.
The lack of curious Signatures I moan,
And want the courage to subscribe my own.

IN THE ALBUM OF LUCY BARTON.

LITTLE Book, surnamed of *white*,
Clean as yet, and fair to sight,
Keep thy attribution right.

Never disproportion'd scrawl ;
Ugly blot, that's worse than all ;
On thy maiden clearness fall !

In each letter, here design'd,
Let the reader emblem'd find
Neatness of the owner's mind.

Gilded margins count a sin,
Let thy leaves attraction win
By the golden rules within ;

Sayings fetch'd from sages old ;
Laws which Holy Writ unfold,
Worthy to be graved in gold :

Lighter fancies not excluding ;
Blameless wit, with nothing rude in,
Sometimes mildly interluding

Amid strains of graver measure :
Virtue's self hath oft her pleasure
In sweet Muses' groves of leisure.

Riddles dark, perplexing sense ;
Darker meanings of offence ;
What but *shades*—be banished hence.

Whitest thoughts in whitest dress,
Candid meanings, best express
Mind of quiet Quakeress.

IN THE ALBUM OF MISS ———.

I.

SUCH goodness in your face doth shine,
With modest look, without design,
That I despair, poor pen of mine
 Can e'er express it.
To give it words I feebly try ;
My spirits fail me to supply
Befitting language for 't, and I
 Can only bless it !


II.

But stop, rash verse ! and don't abuse
A bashful Maiden's ear with news
Of her own virtues. She'll refuse
Praise sung so loudly.
Of that same goodness, you admire,
The best part is, she don't aspire
To praise—nor of herself desire
To think too proudly.

IN THE ALBUM OF A VERY YOUNG LADY.



Joy to unknown Josepha who, I hear,
Of all good gifts, to Music most is given ;
Science divine, which through the enraptured ear
Enchants the Soul, and lifts it nearer Heaven.
Parental smiles approvingly attend
Her pliant conduct of the trembling keys,
And listening strangers their glad suffrage lend.
Most musical is Nature. Birds—and Bees
At their sweet labour—sing. The moaning winds
Rehearse a *lesson* to attentive minds.
In louder tones “ Deep unto Deep doth call ;”
And there is Music in the Waterfall.



IN THE ALBUM OF A FRENCH TEACHER.

IMPLORED for verse, I send you what I can ;
But you are so exact a Frenchwoman,
As I am told, Jemima, that I fear
To wound with English your Parisian ear,
And think I do your choice collection wrong
With lines not written in the Frenchman's tongue.
Had I a knowledge equal to my will,
With airy *Chansons* I your leaves would fill ;
With *Fabliaux* that should emulate the vein
Of sprightly Gresset, or of La Fontaine ;
Or *Scenes Comiques*, that should approach the air
Of your own favourite—renowned Moliere.
But at my suit the Muse of France looks sour,
And strikes me dumb ! Yet, what is in my power
To testify respect for you, I pray,
Take in plain English—our rough Enfield way.

IN THE ALBUM OF MISS DAUBENY.

I.

SOME poets by poetic law
Have Beauties praised, they never saw ;
And sung of Kittys, and of Nancys,
Whose charms but lived in their own fancies.
So I, to keep my Muse a going,
That willingly would still be doing,
A Canzonet or two must try
In praise of—*pretty* Daubeny.

II.

But whether she indeed be comely,
Or only very good and homely,
Of my own eyes I cannot say ;
I trust to Emma Isola.
But sure I think her voice is tuneful,
As smoothest birds that sing in June full ;
For else would strangely disagree
The *flowing* name of—Daubeny.

III.

I hear that she a Book hath got—
As what young Damsel now hath not,
In which they scribble favorite fancies,
Copied from poems or romances ?
And prettiest draughts, of her design,
About the curious Album shine ;
And therefore she shall have for me
The style of—*tasteful* Daubeny.

IV.

Thus far I have taken on believing ;
But well I know without deceiving,
That in her heart she keeps alive still
Old school-day likings, which survive still
In spite of absence—worldly coldness—
And thereon can my Muse take boldness
To crown her other praises three
With praise of—*friendly* Daubeny.

IN THE ALBUM OF MRS. JANE TOWERS.

LADY Unknown, who crav'st from me Unknown
The trifle of a verse these leaves to grace,
How shall I find fit matter? with what face
Address a face that ne'er to me was shown?
Thy looks, tones, gesture, manners, and what not,
Conjecturing, I wander in the dark.
I know thee only Sister to Charles Clarke!
But at that name my cold Muse waxes hot,
And swears that thou art such a one as he,
Warm, laughter-loving, with a touch of madness,
Wild, glee-provoking, pouring oil of gladness
From frank heart without guile. And, if thou be
The pure reverse of this, and I mistake—
Demure one, I will like thee for his sake.

IN MY OWN ALBUM.

FRESH clad from heaven in robes of white,
A young probationer of light,
Thou wert, my soul, an Album bright,

A spotless leaf; but thought, and care,
And friend and foe, in foul or fair,
Have "written strange defeatures" there;

And Time with heaviest hand of all,
Like that fierce writing on the wall,
Hath stamp'd sad dates—he can't recal;

And error gilding worst designs—
Like speckled snake that strays and shines—
Betrays his path by crooked lines;

And vice hath left his ugly blot ;
And good resolves, a moment hot,
Fairly began—but finish'd not ;

And fruitless, late remorse doth trace—
Like Hebrew lore a backward pace—
Her irrecoverable race.

Disjointed numbers ; sense unknit ;
Huge reams of folly, shreds of wit ;
Compose the mingled mass of it.

My scalded eyes no longer brook
Upon this ink-blurr'd thing to look—
Go, shut the leaves, and clasp the book.

ANGEL HELP.*

THIS rare tablet doth include
Poverty with Sanctitude.
Past midnight this poor Maid hath spun,
And yet the work is not half done,
Which must supply from earnings scant
A feeble bed-rid parent's want.
Her sleep-charged eyes exemption ask,
And Holy hands take up the task ;
Unseen the rock and spindle ply,
And do her earthly drudgery.


* Suggested by a drawing in the possession of Charles Aders, Esq., in which is represented the Legend of a poor female Saint ; who, having spun past midnight, to maintain a bed-rid mother, has fallen asleep from fatigue, and Angels are finishing her work. In another part of the chamber, an Angel is tending a lily, the emblem of purity.

Sleep, saintly poor one, sleep, sleep on :
And, waking, find thy labours done.
Perchance she knows it by her dreams ;
Her eye hath caught the golden gleams,
Angelic presence testifying,
That round her every where are flying ;
Ostents from which she may presume,
That much of Heaven is in the room.
Skirting her own bright hair they run,
And to the sunny add more sun :
Now on that aged face they fix,
Streaming from the Crucifix ;
The flesh-clogg'd spirit disabusing,
Death-disarming sleeps infusing,
Prelibations, foretastes high,
And equal thoughts to live or die.
Gardener bright from Eden's bower,
Tend with care that lily flower ;
To its leaves and root infuse
Heaven's sunshine, Heaven's dews.

'Tis a type, and 'tis a pledge,
Of a crowning privilege.
Careful as that lily flower,
This Maid must keep her precious dower ;
Live a sainted Maid, or die
Martyr to virginity.

THE CHRISTENING.

ARRAY'D—a half-angelic sight—
In vests of pure Baptismal white,
The Mother to the Font doth bring
The little helpless nameless thing,
With hushes soft and mild caressing,
At once to get—a name and blessing.
Close by the Babe the Priest doth stand,
The Cleansing Water at his hand,
Which must assoil the soul within
From every stain of Adam's sin.
The Infant eyes the mystic scenes,
Nor knows what all this wonder means ;




And now he smiles, as if to say
“ I am a Christian made this day ; ”
Now frightened clings to Nurse’s hold,
Shrinking from the water cold,
Whose virtues, rightly understood,
Are, as Bethesda’s waters, good.
Strange words—The World, The Flesh, The Devil—
Poor Babe, what can it know of Evil ?
But we must silently adore
Mysterious truths, and not explore.
Enough for him, in after-times,
When he shall read these artless rhymes,
If, looking back upon this day
With quiet conscience, he can say
“ I have in part redeem’d the pledge
Of my Baptismal privilege ;
And more and more will strive to flee
All which my Sponsors kind did then renounce for me.”

ON
AN INFANT DYING AS SOON AS BORN.

I SAW where in the shroud did lurk
A curious frame of Nature's work.
A flow'ret crushed in the bud,
A nameless piece of Babyhood,
Was in her cradle-coffin lying;
Extinct, with scarce the sense of dying;
So soon to exchange the imprisoning womb
For darker closets of the tomb!
She did but ope an eye, and put
A clear beam forth, then strait up shut
For the long dark: ne'er more to see
Through glasses of mortality.

Riddle of destiny, who can show
What thy short visit meant, or know
What thy errand here below ?
Shall we say, that Nature blind
Check'd her hand, and changed her mind,
Just when she had exactly wrought
A finish'd pattern without fault ?
Could she flag, or could she tire,
Or lack'd she the Promethean fire
(With her nine moons' long workings sicken'd)
That should thy little limbs have quicken'd ?
Limbs so firm, they seem'd to assure
Life of health, and days mature :
Woman's self in miniature !
Limbs so fair, they might supply
(Themselves now but cold imagery)
The sculptor to make Beauty by.
Or did the stern-eyed Fate descry,
That babe, or mother, one must die ;
So in mercy left the stock,
And cut the branch ; to save the shock

Of young years widow'd ; and the pain,
When Single State comes back again
To the lone man who, 'reft of wife,
Thenceforward drags a maimed life ?
The economy of Heaven is dark ;
And wisest clerks have miss'd the mark,
Why Human Buds, like this, should fall,
More brief than fly ephemeral,
That has his day ; while shrivel'd crones
Stiffen with age to stocks and stones ;
And crabbed use the conscience sears
In sinners of an hundred years.
Mother's prattle, mother's kiss,
Baby fond, thou ne'er wilt miss.
Rites, which custom does impose,
Silver bells and baby clothes ;
Coral redder than those lips,
Which pale death did late eclipse ;
Music framed for infants' glee,
Whistle never tuned for thee ;



Though thou want'st not, thou shalt have them,
Loving hearts were they which gave them.
Let not one be missing; nurse,
See them laid upon the hearse
Of infant slain by doom perverse.
Why should kings and nobles have
Pictured trophies to their grave;
And we, churls, to thee deny
Thy pretty toys with thee to lie,
A more harmless vanity?

TO BERNARD BARTON,

WITH A COLOURED PRINT.*

WHEN last you left your Woodbridge pretty,
To stare at sights, and see the City,
If I your meaning understood,
You wish'd a Picture, cheap, but good ;
The colouring ? decent ; clear, not muddy ;
To suit a Poet's quiet study,
Where Books and Prints for delectation
Hang, rather than vain ostentation.
The subject ? what I pleased, if comely ;
But something scriptural and homely :

* From the venerable and ancient Manufactory of Carrington Bowles : some of my readers may recognise it.

A sober Piece, not gay or wanton,
For winter fire-sides to descant on ;
The theme so scrupulously handled,
A Quaker might look on unscandal'd ;
Such as might satisfy Ann Knight,
And classic Mitford just not fright.
Just such a one I've found, and send it ;
If liked, I give—if not, but lend it.
The moral ? nothing can be sounder.
The fable ? 'tis its own expounder—
A Mother teaching to her Chit
Some good book, and explaining it.
He, silly urchin, tired of lesson,
His learning lays no mighty stress on,
But seems to hear not what he hears ;
Thrusting his fingers in his ears,
Like Obstinate, that perverse funny one,
In honest parable of Bunyan.
His working Sister, more sedate,
Listens ; but in a kind of state,

The painter meant for steadiness,
But has a tinge of sullenness ;
And, at first sight, she seems to brook
As ill her needle, as he his book.
This is the Picture. For the Frame—
'Tis not ill-suited to the same ;
Oak-carved, not gilt, for fear of falling ;
Old fashion'd ; plain, yet not appalling ;
And sober, as the Owner's Calling.

THE YOUNG CATECHIST.*

WHILE this tawny Ethiop prayeth,
Painter, who is she that stayeth
By, with skin of whitest lustre,
Sunny locks, a shining cluster,
Saint-like seeming to direct him
To the Power that must protect him ?
Is she of the Heaven-born Three,
Meek Hope, strong Faith, sweet Charity ;
Or some Cherub ?—

They you mention
Far transcend my weak invention.

* A Picture by Henry Meyer, Esq.

'Tis a simple Christian child,
Missionary young and mild,
From her stock of Scriptural knowledge,
Bible-taught without a college,
Which by reading she could gather,
Teaches him to say OUR FATHER
To the common Parent, who
Colour not respects, nor hue.
White and black in him have part,
Who looks not to the skin, but heart.

SHE IS GOING.

For their elder Sister's hair
Martha does a wreath prepare
Of bridal rose, ornate and gay :
To-morrow is the wedding day :
She is going.

Mary, youngest of the three,
Laughing idler, full of glee,
Arm in arm does fondly chain her,
Thinking, poor trifier, to detain her—
But she 's going.

Vex not, maidens, nor regret
Thus to part with Margaret.
Charms like your's can never stay
Long within doors ; and one day
You'll be going.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND,

ON HER TWENTY-FIRST BIRTH-DAY.

CROWN me a cheerful goblet, while I pray
A blessing on thy years, young Isola ;
Young, but no more a child. How swift have flown
To me thy girlish times, a woman grown
Beneath my heedless eyes ! in vain I rack
My fancy to believe the almanac,
That speaks thee Twenty-One. Thou should'st have still
Remain'd a child, and at thy sovereign will
Gambol'd about our house, as in times past.
Ungrateful Emma, to grow up so fast,
Hastening to leave thy friends !—for which intent,
Fond Runagate, be this thy punishment.
After some thirty years, spent in such bliss
As this earth can afford, where still we miss

Something of joy entire, may'st thou grow old
As we whom thou hast left ! That wish was cold.
O far more ag'd and wrinkled, till folks say,
Looking upon thee reverend in decay,
"This Dame for length of days, and virtues rare,
With her respected Grandsire may compare."—
Grandchild of that respected Isola,
Thou should'st have had about thee on this day
Kind looks of Parents, to congratulate
Their Pride grown up to woman's grave estate.
But they have died, and left thee, to advance
Thy fortunes how thou may'st, and owe to chance
The friends which Nature grudg'd. And thou wilt find,
Or make such, Emma, if I am not blind
To thee and thy deservings. That last strain
Had too much sorrow in it. Fill again
Another cheerful goblet, while I say
"Health, and twice health, to our lost Isola."

TO THE SAME.


EXTERNAL gifts of fortune, or of face,
Maiden, in truth, thou hast not much to show ;
Much fairer damsels have I known, and know,
And richer may be found in every place.
In thy *mind* seek thy beauty, and thy wealth.
Sincereness lodgeth there, the soul's best health.
O guard that treasure above gold or pearl,
Laid up secure from moths and worldly stealth—
And take my benison, plain-hearted girl.

HARMONY IN UNLIKENESS.

By Enfield lanes, and Winchmore's verdant hill,
Two lovely damsels cheer my lonely walk :
The fair Maria, as a vestal, still ;
And Emma brown, exuberant in talk.
With soft and Lady speech the first applies
The mild correctives that to grace belong
To her redundant friend, who her defies
With jest, and mad discourse, and bursts of song.
O differing Pair, yet sweetly thus agreeing,
What music from your happy discord rises,
While your companion hearing each, and seeing,
Nor this, nor that, but both together, prizes ;
This lesson teaching, which our souls may strike,
That harmonies may be in things unlike !

WRITTEN AT CAMBRIDGE.

I WAS not train'd in Academic bowers,
And to those learned streams I nothing owe
Which copious from those twin fair founts do flow ;
Mine have been any thing but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy, wandering 'mid thy towers,
Myself a nursling, Granta, of thy lap ;
My brow seems tightening with the Doctor's cap,
And I walk *gowned* ; feel unusual powers.
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech,
Old Ramus' ghost ~~is~~ busy at my brain ;
And my scull teems with notions infinite.
Be still, ye reeds of Camus, while I teach
Truths, which transcend the searching Schoolmen's vein,
And half had stagger'd that stout Stagirite !



TO A CELEBRATED FEMALE PERFORMER
IN THE "BLIND BOY."

RARE artist ! who with half thy tools, or none,
Canst execute with ease thy curious art,
And press thy powerful'st meanings on the heart,
Unaided by the eye, expression's throne !
While each blind sense, intelligential grown
Beyond its sphere, performs the effect of sight :
Those orbs alone, wanting their proper might,
All motionless and silent seem to moan
The unseemly negligence of nature's hand,
That left them so forlorn. What praise is thine,
O mistress of the passions ; artist fine !
Who dost our souls against our sense command,
Plucking the horror from a sightless face,
Lending to blank deformity a grace.

WORK.

Who first invented work, and bound the free
And holyday-rejoicing spirit down
To the ever-haunting importunity
Of business in the green fields, and the town—
To plough, loom, anvil, spade—and oh ! most sad,
To that dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood ?
Who but the Being unblest, alien from good,
Sabbathless Satan ! he who his unglad
Task ever plies 'mid rotatory burnings,
That round and round incalculably reel—
For wrath divine hath made him like a wheel—
In that red realm from which are no returnings ;
Where toiling, and turmoiling, ever and aye
He, and his thoughts, keep pensive working-day.

LEISURE.

THEY talk of time, and of time's galling yoke,
That like a mill-stone on man's mind doth press,
Which only works and business can redress :
Of divine Leisure such foul lies are spoke,
Wounding her fair gifts with calumnious stroke.
But might I, fed with silent meditation,
Assoiled live from that fiend Occupation—
Improbis Labor, which my spirits hath broke—
I'd drink of time's rich cup, and never surfeit :
Fling in more days than went to make the gem,
That crown'd the white top of Methusalem :
Yea on my weak neck take, and never forfeit,
Like Atlas bearing up the dainty sky,
The heaven-sweet burthen of eternity.

DEUS NOBIS HÆC OTIA FECIT.

TO SAMUEL ROGERS, ESQ.

ROGERS, of all the men that I have known
But slightly, who have died, your Brother's loss
Touch'd me most sensibly. There came across
My mind an image of the cordial tone
Of your fraternal meetings, where a guest
I more than once have sat ; and grieve to think,
That of that threefold cord one precious link
By Death's rude hand is sever'd from the rest.
Of our old Gentry he appear'd a stem—
A Magistrate who, while the evil-doer
He kept in terror, could respect the Poor,
And not for every trifle harass them,
As some, divine and laic, too oft do.
This man's a private loss, and public too.

THE GIPSY'S MALISON.

" Suck, baby, suck, mother's love grows by giving,
■ Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting ;
Black manhood comes, when riotous guilty living
Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.

Kiss, baby, kiss, mother's lips shine by kisses,
Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings ;
Black manhood comes, when turbulent guilty blisses
Tend thee the kiss that poisons 'mid caressings.

Hang, baby, hang, mother's love loves such forces,
Strain the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging ;
Black manhood comes, when violent lawless courses
Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging."

So sang a wither'd Beldam energetical,
And bann'd the un giving door with lips prophetical.

TO THE AUTHOR OF POEMS,

PUBLISHED UNDER THE NAME OF BARRY CORNWALL.

LET hate, or grosser heats, their foulness mask
Under the vizor of a borrowed name ;
Let things eschew the light deserving blame :
No cause hast thou to blush for thy sweet task.
“ Marcian Colonna ” is a dainty book ;
And thy “ Sicilian Tale ” may boldly pass ;
Thy “ Dream ” ’bove all, in which, as in a glass,
On the great world’s antique glories we may look.
No longer then, as “ lowly substitute,
Factor, or PROCTOR, for another’s gains,”
Suffer the admiring world to be deceived ;
Lest thou thyself, by self of fame bereaved,
Lament too late the lost prize of thy pains,
And heavenly tunes piped through an alien flute.

TO R. S. KNOWLES, ESQ.

ON HIS TRAGEDY OF VIRGINIUS.

TWELVE years ago I knew thee, Knowles, and then
Esteemed you a perfect specimen
Of those fine spirits warm-soul'd Ireland sends,
To teach us colder English how a friend's
Quick pulse should beat. I knew you brave, and plain,
Strong-sensed, rough-witted, above fear or gain ;
But nothing further had the gift to espy.
Sudden you re-appear. With wonder I
Hear my old friend (turn'd Shakspeare) read a scene
Only to *his* inferior in the clean
Passes of pathos : with such fence-like art—
Ere we can see the steel, 'tis in our heart.

Almost without the aid language affords,
Your piece seems wrought. That huffing medium, *words*,
(Which in the modern Tamburlaines quite sway
Our shamed souls from their bias) in your play
We scarce attend to. Hastier passion draws
Our tears on credit : and we find the cause
Some two hours after, spelling o'er again
Those strange few words at ease, that wrought the pain.
Proceed, old friend ; and, as the year returns,
Still snatch some new old story from the urns
Of long-dead virtue. We, that knew before
Your worth, may admire, we cannot love you more.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "EVERY-DAY BOOK."

I LIKE you, and your book, ingenuous Hone !
 In whose capacious all-embracing leaves
 The very marrow of tradition's shown ;
 And all that history—much that fiction—weaves.

By every sort of taste your work is graced.
 Vast stores of modern anecdote we find,
 With good old story quaintly interlaced—
 The theme as various as the reader's mind.

Rome's lie-fraught legends you so truly paint—
 Yet kindly,—that the half-turn'd Catholic
 Scarcely forbears to smile at his own saint,
 And cannot curse the candid heretic.

Rags, relics, witches, ghosts, fiends, crowd your page;
Our fathers' mummeries we well-pleased behold,
And, proudly conscious of a purer age,
Forgive some fopperies in the times of old.

Verse-honouring Phœbus, Father of bright *Days*,
Must needs bestow on you both good and many,
Who, building trophies of his Children's praise,
Run their rich Zodiac through, not missing any

Dan Phœbus loves your book—trust me, friend Hone—
The title only errs, he bids me say :
For while such art, wit, reading, there are shown,
He swears, 'tis not a work of *every day*.

TO CAROLINE MARIA APPLEBEE.

AN ACROSTIC.

CAROLINE glides smooth in verse,
And is easy to rehearse ;
Runs just like some crystal river
O'er its pebbly bed for ever.
Lines as harsh and quaint as mine
In their close at least will shine,
Nor from sweetness can decline,
Ending but with *Caroline*.

Maria asks a statelier pace—
“ *Ave Maria*, full of grace ! ”
Romish rites before me rise,
Image-worship, sacrifice,
And well-meant but mistaken pieties.

Apple with *Bee* doth rougher run.
Paradise was lost by one ;
Peace of mind would we regain,
Let us, like the other, strain
Every harmless faculty,
Bee-like at work in our degree,
Ever some sweet task designing,
Extracting still, and still refining.

TO CECILIA CATHERINE LAWTON.

AN ACROSTIC.

CHORAL service, solemn chanting,
Echoing round cathedrals holy—
Can ought else on earth be wanting
In heav'n's bliss to plunge us wholly?
Let us great *Cecilia* honour
In the praise we give unto them,
And the merit be upon her.

Cold the heart that would undo them,
And the solemn organ banish
That this sainted Maid invented.
Holy thoughts too quickly vanish,
Ere the expression can be vented.

Raise the song to *Catherine*,
In her torments most divine !
Ne'er by Christians be forgot—
Envied be—this Martyr's lot.

Lawton, who these *names* combinest,
Aim to emulate their praises ;
Women were they, yet divinest
Truths they taught ; and story raises
O'er their mouldering bones a Tomb,
Not to die till Day of Doom.

ACROSTIC,

TO A LADY WHO DESIRED ME TO WRITE HER EPITAPH.

GRACE JOANNA here doth lie :
Reader, wonder not that I
Ante-date her hour of rest.
Can I thwart her wish exprest,
Ev'n unseemly though the laugh

Jesting with an Epitaph ?
On her bones the turf lie lightly,
And her rise again be brightly !
No dark stain be found upon her—
No, there will not, on mine honour—
Answer that at least I can.

Would that I, thrice happy man,
In as spotless garb might rise,
Light as she will climb the skies,
Leaving the dull earth behind,
In a car more swift than wind.
All her errors, all her failings,
(Many they were not) and ailings,
Sleep secure from Envy's railings.

ANOTHER,

TO HER YOUNGEST DAUGHTER.

LEAST Daughter, but not least beloved, of *Grace* !
O frown not on a stranger, who from place
Unknown and distant these few lines hath penn'd.
I but report what thy Instructress Friend
So oft hath told us of thy gentle heart.
A pupil most affectionate thou art,

Careful to learn what elder years impart.
Louisa—Clare—by which name shall I call thee ?
A prettier pair of names sure ne'er was found,
Resembling thy own sweetness in sweet sound.
Ever calm peace and innocence befall thee !


Translations.

FROM THE LATIN OF VINCENT BOURNE.

I.

ON A SEPULCHRAL STATUE OF AN INFANT SLEEPING.

BEAUTIFUL Infant, who dost keep
Thy posture here, and sleep'st a marble sleep,
May the repose unbroken be,
Which the fine Artist's hand hath lent to thee,
While thou enjoy'st along with it
That which no art, or craft, could ever hit,
Or counterfeit to mortal sense,
The heaven-infused sleep of Innocence !



II.


THE RIVAL BELLS.

A TUNEFUL challenge rings from either side
Of Thames' fair banks. Thy twice six Bells, Saint
Bride,
Peal swift and shrill ; to which more slow reply
The deep-toned eight of Mary Overy.
Such harmony from the contention flows,
That the divided ear no preference knows ;
Betwixt them both disparting Music's State,
While one exceeds in number, one in weight.

III.

EPITAPH ON A DOG.

POOR Irus' faithful wolf-dog here I lie,
That wont to tend my old blind master's steps,
His guide and guard ; nor, while my service lasted,
Had he occasion for that staff, with which
He now goes picking out his path in fear
Over the highways and crossings, but would plant
Safe in the conduct of my friendly string,
A firm foot forward still, till he had reach'd
His poor seat on some stone, nigh where the tide
Of passers-by in thickest confluence flow'd :
To whom with loud and passionate laments
From morn to eve his dark estate he wail'd.



Nor wail'd to all in vain : some here and there,
The well disposed and good, their pennies gave.
I meantime at his feet obsequious slept ;
Not all-asleep in sleep, but heart and ear
Prick'd up at his least motion, to receive
At his kind hand my customary crumbs,
And common portion in his feast of scraps ;
Or when night warn'd us homeward, tired and spent
With our long day, and tedious beggary.
These were my manners, this my way of life,
Till age and slow disease me overtook,
And sever'd from my sightless master's side.
But lest the grace of so good deeds should die,
Through tract of years in mute oblivion lost,
This slender tomb of turf hath Irus rear'd,
Cheap monument of no ungrudging hand,
And with short verse inscribed it, to attest,
In long and lasting union to attest,
The virtues of the Beggar and his Dog.

IV.

THE BALLAD SINGERS.

WHERE seven fair Streets to one tall Column* draw,
Two Nymphs have ta'en their stand, in hats of straw;
Their yellower necks huge beads of amber grace,
And by their trade they're of the Sirens' race :
With cloak loose-pinn'd on each, that has been red,
But long with dust and dirt discoloured
Belies its hue ; in mud behind, before,
From heel to middle leg becrusted o'er.
One a small infant at the breast does bear ;
And one in her right hand her tuneful ware,

* Seven Dials.

Which she would vend. Their station scarce is taken,
When youths and maids flock round. His stall forsaken,

Forth comes a Son of Crispin, leathern-capt,
Prepared to buy a ballad, if one apt
To move his fancy offers. Crispin's sons
Have, from uncounted time, with ale and buns
Cherish'd the gift of *Song*, which sorrow quells;
And, working single in their low-rooft cells,
Oft cheat the tedium of a winter's night
With anthems warbled in the Muses' spight.
Who now hath caught the alarm? the Servant Maid
Hath heard a buzz at distance; and, afraid
To miss a note, with elbows red comes out.
Leaving his forge to cool, Pyracmon stout
Thrusts in his unwash'd visage. *He* stands by,
Who the hard trade of Portage does ply
With stooping shoulders. What cares he? he sees
The assembled ring, nor heeds his tottering knees,
But pricks his ears up with the hopes of song.
So, while the Bard of Rhodope his wrong

Bewail'd to Proserpine on Thracian strings,
The tasks of gloomy Orcus lost their stings,
And stone-venx Sysiphus forgets his load.
Hither and thither from the sevenfold road
Some cart or waggon crosses, which divides
The close-wedged audience; but, as when the tides
To ploughing ships give way, the ship being past,
They re-unite, so these unite as fast.
The older Songstress hitherto hath spent
Her elocution in the argument
Of their great Song in *prose*; to wit, the woes
Which Maiden true to faithless Sailor owes—
Ah! “*Wandering He!*”—which now in loftier *verse*
Pathetic they alternately rehearse.
All gaping wait the event. This Critic opes
His right ear to the strain. The other hopes
To catch it better with his left. Long trade
It were to tell, how the deluded Maid
A victim fell. And now right greedily
All hands are stretching forth the songs to buy,

That are so tragical ; which She, and She,
Deals out, and *sings the while* ; nor can there be
A breast so obdurate here, that will hold back
His contribution from the gentle rack
Of Music's pleasing torture. Irus' self,
The staff-propt Beggar, his thin-gotten pelf
Brings out from pouch, where squalid farthings rest,
And boldly claims his ballad with the best.
An old Dame only lingers. To her purse
The penny sticks. At length, with harmless curse,
" Give me," she cries. " I'll paste it on my wall,
While the wall lasts, to show what ills befall
Fond hearts, seduced from Innocency's way ;
How Maidens fall, and Mariners betray."

V.

TO DAVID COOK,

OF THE PARISH OF SAINT MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER, WATCHMAN.

FOR much good-natured verse received from thee,
A loving verse take in return from me.
“ Good morrow to my masters,” is your cry ;
And to our David, “ twice as good,” say I.
Not Peter’s monitor, shrill chanticleer,
Crows the approach of dawn in notes more clear,
Or tells the hours more faithfully. While night
Fills half the world with shadows of affright,
You with your lantern, partner of your round,
Traverse the paths of Margaret’s hallow’d bound.
The tales of ghosts which old wives’ ears drink up,
The drunkard reeling home from tavern cup,

Nor prowling robber, your firm soul appal ;
Arm'd with thy faithful staff thou slight'st them all.
But if the market gard'ner chance to pass,
Bringing to town his fruit, or early grass,
The gentle salesman you with candour greet,
And with reit'rated " good mornings " meet.
Announcing your approach by formal bell,
Of nightly weather you the changes tell ;
Whether the Moon shines, or her head doth steep
In rain-portending clouds. When mortals sleep
In downy rest, you brave the snows and sleet
Of winter ; and in alley, or in street,
Relieve your midnight progress with a verse.
What though fastidious Phœbus frown averse
On your didactic strain—indulgent Night
With caution hath seal'd up both ears of Spite,
And critics sleep while you in staves do sound
The praise of long-dead Saints, whose Days abound
In wintry months ; but Crispin chief proclaim :
Who stirs not at that Prince of Coblers' name ?

Profuse in loyalty some couplets shine,
And wish long days to all the Brunswick line !
To youths and virgins they chaste lessons read ;
Teach wives and husbands how their lives to lead ;
Maids to be cleanly, footmen free from vice ;
How death at last all ranks doth equalise ;
And, in conclusion, pray good years befall,
With store of wealth, your “ worthy masters all.”
For this and other tokens of good will,
On boxing day may store of shillings fill
Your Christmas purse ; no householder give less,
When at each door your blameless suit you press :
And what you wish to us (it is but reason)
Receive in turn—the compliments o’ th’ season !

VI.

ON A DEAF AND DUMB ARTIST. *

AND hath thy blameless life become
A prey to the devouring tomb ?
A more mute silence hast thou known,
A deafness deeper than thine own,
While Time was ? and no friendly Muse,
That mark'd thy life, and knows thy dues,
Repair with quickening verse the breach,
And write thee into light and speech ?
The Power, that made the Tongue, restrain'd
Thy lips from lies, and speeches feign'd ;
Who made the Hearing, without wrong
Did rescue thine from Siren's song.

* Benjamin Ferrers—died A.D. 1732.

He let thee *see* the ways of men,
Which thou with pencil, not with pen,
Careful Beholder, down did'st note,
And all their motley actions quote,
Thyself unstain'd the while. From look
Or gesture reading, more than *book*,
In letter'd pride thou took'st no part,
Contented with the Silent Art,
Thyself as silent. Might I be
As speechless, deaf, and good, as He !

VII.

NEWTON'S PRINCIPIA.

GREAT Newton's self, to whom the world's in debt,
Owed to School Mistress sage his Alphabet ;
But quickly wiser than his Teacher grown,
Discover'd properties to her unknown ;
Of A *plus* B, or *minus*, learn'd the use,
Known Quantities from unknown to educe ;
And made—no doubt to that old dame's surprise—
The Christ-Cross-Row his Ladder to the skies.
Yet, whatsoe'er Geometricians say,
Her Lessons were his true PRINCIPIA !

VIII.

THE HOUSE-KEEPER.

THE frugal snail, with fore-cast of repose,
Carries his house with him, where'er he goes ;
Peeps out—and if there comes a shower of rain,
Retreats to his small domicile amain.
Touch but a tip of him, a horn—'tis well—
He curls up in his sanctuary shell.
He's his own landlord, his own tenant ; stay
Long as he will, he dreads no Quarter Day.
Himself he boards and lodges ; both invites,
And feasts, himself ; sleeps with himself o' nights.
He spares the upholsterer trouble to procure
Chattles ; himself is his own furniture,
And his sole riches. Wheresoe'er he roam—
Knock when you will—he's sure to be at home.

IX.

THE FEMALE ORATORS.

NIGH London's famous Bridge, a Gate more famed
Stands, or once stood, from old Belinus named,
So judged Antiquity; and therein wrongs
A name, allusive strictly to *two Tongues*. *
Her School hard by the Goddess Rhetoric opes,
And *gratis* deals to Oyster-wives her Tropes.
With Nereid green, green Nereid disputes,
Replies, rejoins, confutes, and still confutes.
One her coarse sense by metaphors expounds,
And one in literalities abounds;
In mood and figure these keep up the din:
Words multiply, and every word tells in.
Her hundred throats here bawling Slander strains;
And unclothed Venus to her tongue gives reins

* *Billings* in the Latin.

In terms, which Demosthenic force outgo,
And baldest jests of foul-mouth'd Cicero.
Right in the midst great Ate keeps her stand,
And from her sovereign station taints the land.
Hence Pulpits rail ; grave Senates learn to jar ;
Quacks scold ; and Billingsgate infects the Bar.

PINDARIC ODE TO THE TREAD MILL.

I.

INSPIRE my spirit, Spirit of De Foe,
That sang the Pillory,
In loftier strains to show
A more sublime Machine
Than that, where thou wert seen,
With neck out-stretcht and shoulders ill awry,
Courting coarse plaudits from vile crowds below —
A most unseemly show !

II.

In such a place
Who could expose thy face,
Historiographer of deathless Crusoe !
That paint'st the strife
And all the naked ills of savage life,
Far above Rousseau ?
Rather myself had stood
In that ignoble wood,
Bare to the mob, on holyday or high day.
If nought else could atone
For waggish libel,
I swear on bible,
I would have spared him for thy sake alone,
Man Friday !

III.

Our ancestors' were sour days,
Great Master of Romance !
A milder doom had fallen to thy chance
In our days :

Thy sole assignment
Some solitary confinement,
(Not worth thy care a carrot,) .
Where in world-hidden cell
Thou thy own Crusoe might have acted well,
Only without the parrot ;
By sure experience taught to know,
Whether the qualms thou mak'st him feel were truly
such or no.


IV.

But stay ! methinks in statelier measure—
A more companionable pleasure—
I see thy steps the mighty Tread Mill trace,
(The subject of my song,
Delay'd however long,)
And some of thine own race,
To keep thee company, thou bring'st with thee along.
There with thee go,
Link'd in like sentence,
With regulated pace and footing slow,

Each old acquaintance,
Rogue—harlot—thief—that live to future ages ;
Through many a labour'd tome,
Rankly embalm'd in thy too natural pages.
Faith, friend De Foe, thou art quite at home !
Not one of thy great offspring thou dost lack,
From pirate Singleton to pilfering Jack.
Here Flandrian Moll her brazen incest brags ;
Vice-stript Roxana, penitent in rags,
There points to Amy, treading equal chimes,
The faithful handmaid to her faithless crimes.

v.

Incompetent my song to raise
To its just height thy praise,
Great Mill !
That by thy motion proper
(No thanks to wind, or sail, or working rill)
Grinding that stubborn corn, the Human will,
Turn'st out men's consciences,
That were begrimed before, as clean and sweet



As flour from purest wheat,
Into thy hopper.
All reformation short of thee but nonsense is,
Or human, or divine.

VI.

Compared with thee,
What are the labours of that Jumping Sect,
Which feeble laws connive at rather than respect ?
Thou dost not bump,
Or jump,
But *walk* men into virtue ; betwixt crime
And slow repentance giving breathing time,
And leisure to be good ;
Instructing with discretion demi-reps
How to direct their steps.

VII.

Thou best Philosopher made out of wood !
Not that which framed the tub,
Where sate the Cynic cub,

With nothing in his bosom *sympathetic* ;
But from those groves derived, I deem,
Where Plato nursed his dream
Of immortality ;
Seeing that clearly
Thy system all is merely
Peripatetic.
Thou to thy pupils dost such lessons give
Of how to live
With temperance, sobriety, morality,
(A new art,)
That from thy school, by force of virtuous deeds,
Each Tyro now proceeds
A " Walking Stewart !"

GOING OR GONE.

I.

FINE merry franions,
Wanton companions,
My days are ev'n banyans
 With thinking upon ye ;
How Death, that last stinger,
Finis-writer, end-bringer,
Has laid his chill finger,
 Or is laying on ye.

II.

There's rich Kitty Wheatley,
With footing it featly
That took me completely,
 She sleeps in the Kirk House ;
And poor Polly Perkin,
Whose Dad was still firking
The jolly ale firkin,
 She's gone to the Work-house ;

III.

Fine Gard'ner, Ben Carter
(In ten counties no smarter)
Has ta'en his departure
 For Proserpine's orchards ;
And Lily, postillion,
With cheeks of vermilion,
Is one of a million
 That fill up the church-yards;

IV.

And, lusty as Dido,
Fat Clemitson's widow
Flits now a small shadow
 By Stygian hid ford ;
And good Master Clapton
Has thirty years nap't on
The ground he last hap't on,
 Intomb'd by fair Widford ;

V.

And gallant Tom Dockwra,
Of Nature's finest crockery,
Now but thin air and mockery,
 Lurks by Avernus,
Whose honest grasp of hand
Still, while his life did stand,
At friend's or foe's command,
 Almost did burn us.

VI.

Roger de Coverley
Not more good man than he ;
Yet has he equally
 Push'd for Cocytus,
With drivelling Worral,
And wicked old Dorrell,
'Gainst whom I've a quarrel,
 Whose end might affright us !—

VII.

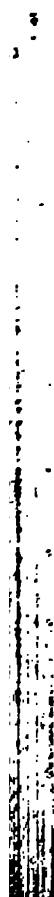
Kindly hearts have I known ;
Kindly hearts, they are flown ;
Here and there if but one
 Linger yet uneffaced,
Imbecile tottering elves,
Soon to be wreck'd on shelves,
These scarce are half themselves,
 With age and care crazed.

VIII.

But this day Fanny Hutton
Her last dress has put on ;
Her fine lessons forgotten,
 She died, as the dunce died :
And prim Betsy Chambers,
Decay'd in her members,
No longer remembers
 Things, as she once did ;

IX.

And prudent Miss Wither
Not in jest now doth *wither*,
And soon must go—whither
 Nor I well, nor you know ;
And flaunting Miss Waller,
That soon must befall her,
Whence none can recal her,
 Though proud once as Juno !



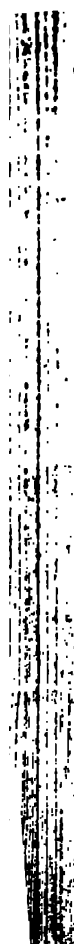
THE WIFE'S TRIAL;

OR

THE INTRUDING WIDOW,

A Dramatic Poem,

FOUNDED ON MR. CRABBE'S TALE OF THE "CONFIDANT."



CHARACTERS:

MR. SELBY *a Wiltshire Gentleman.*

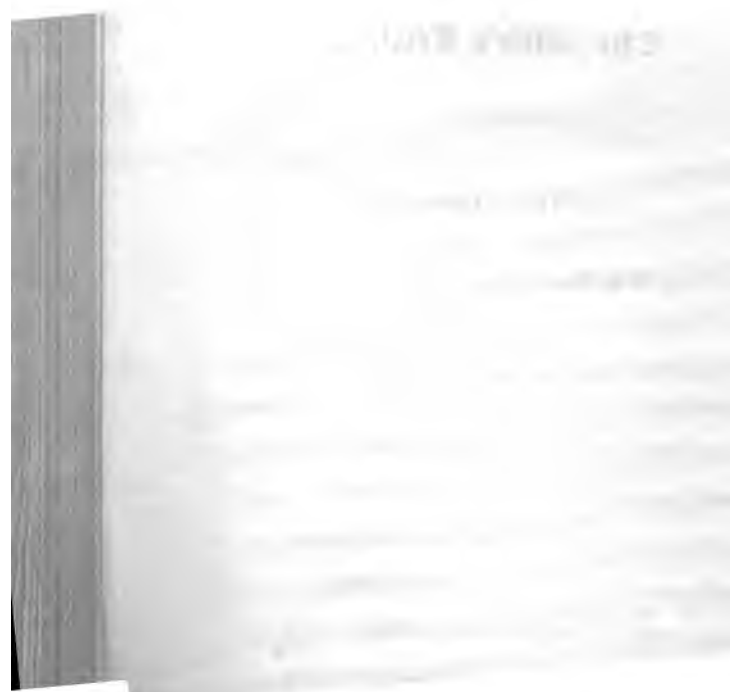
KATHERINE *Wife to Selby.*

LUCY *Sister to Selby.*

MRS. FRAMPTON *a Widow.*

SERVANTS.

SCENE, at *Mr. Selby's house, or in the grounds adjacent.*



The Wife's Trial.

SCENE—*a Library.*

MR. SELBY, CATHERINE.

SELBY.

Do not too far mistake me, gentlest wife ;
I meant to chide your virtues, not yourself,
And those too with allowance. I have not
Been blest by thy fair side with five white years
Of smooth and even wedlock, now to touch
With any strain of harshness on a string
Hath yielded me such music. 'Twas the quality
Of a too grateful nature in my Katherine,
That to the lame performance of some vices,
And common courtesies of man to wife,

Attributing too much, hath sometimes seem'd
To esteem as favours, what in that blest union
Are but reciprocal and trivial dues,
As fairly yours as mine : 'twas this I thought
Gently to reprehend.

KATHERINE.

In friendship's barter
The riches we exchange should hold some level,
And corresponding worth. Jewels for toys
Demand some thanks thrown in. You took me, sir,
To that blest haven of my peace, your bosom,
An orphan founder'd in the world's black storm.
Poor, you have made me rich ; from lonely maiden,
Your cherish'd and your full-accompanied wife.

SELBY.

But to divert the subject : Kate too fond,
I would not wrest your meanings ; else that word
Accompanied, and full-accompanied too,
Might raise a doubt in some men, that their wives
Haply did think their company too long ;

And over-company, we know by proof,
Is worse than no attendance.

KATHERINE.

I must guess,

You speak this of the Widow—

SELBY.

'Twas a bolt

At random shot ; but if it hit, believe me,

I am most sorry to have wounded you

Through a friend's side. I know not how we have
swerved

From our first talk. I was to caution you

Against this fault of a too grateful nature :

Which, for some girlish obligations past,

In that relenting season of the heart,

When slightest favours pass for benefits

Of endless binding, would entail upon you

An iron slavery of obsequious duty

To the proud will of an imperious woman.

KATHERINE.

The favours are not slight to her I owe.

SELBY.

Slight or not slight, the tribute she exacts
Cancels all dues— [A voice within.
even now I hear her call you
In such a tone, as lordliest mistresses
Expect a slave's attendance. Prithee, Kate
Let her expect a brace of minutes or so.
Say, you are busy. Use her by degrees
To some less hard exactions.

KATHERINE.

I conjure you,
Detain me not. I will return—

SELBY.

Sweet wife
Use thy own pleasure— [Exit Katherine.
but it troubles me.

A visit of three days, as was pretended,
Spun to ten tedious weeks, and no hint given
When she will go ! I would this buxom Widow
Were a thought handsomer ! I'd fairly try
My Katherine's constancy ; make desperate love

In seeming earnest ; and raise up such broils,
That she, not I, should be the first to warn
The insidious guest depart.

Re-enter KATHERINE.

So soon return'd
What was our Widow's will ?

KATHERINE.

A trifle, Sir.

SELBY.

Some toilet service—to adjust her head,
Or help to stick a pin in the right place—

KATHERINE.

Indeed 'twas none of these.

SELBY.

or new vamp up
The tarnish'd cloak she came in. I have seen her
Demand such service from thee, as her maid,
Twice told to do it, would blush angry-red,
And pack her few clothes up. Poor fool ! fond slave !
And yet my dearest Kate !—This day at least

(It is our wedding day) we spend in freedom,
And will forget our Widow.—Philip, our coach—
Why weeps my wife? You know, I promised you
An airing o'er the pleasant Hampshire downs
To the blest cottage on the green hill side,
Where first I told my love. I wonder much,
If the crimson parlour hath exchanged its hue
For colours not so welcome. Faded though
it be,

It will not shew less lovely than the tinge
Of this faint red, contending with the pale,
Where once the full-flush'd health gave to this cheek
An apt resemblance to the fruit's warm side,
That bears my Katherine's name.—

Our carriage, Philip.

Enter a Servant.

Now, Robin, what make you here?

SERVANT.

May it please you,

The coachman has driven out with Mrs. Frampton.

SELBY.

He had no orders—

SERVANT.

None, Sir, that I know of,
But from the lady, who expects some letter
At the next Post Town.

SELBY.

Go, Robin. *[Exit Servant.]*

How is this?

KATHERINE.

I came to tell you so, but fear'd your anger—

SELBY.

It was ill done though of this Mistress Frampton,
This forward Widow. But a ride's poor loss
Imports not much. In to your chamber, love,
Where you with music may beguile the hour,
While I am tossing over dusty tomes,
Till our most reasonable friend returns.

KATHERINE.

I am all obedience. *[Exit Katherine.]*

SELBY.

Too obedient, Kate,

And to too many masters. I can hardly
On such a day as this refrain to speak
My sense of this injurious friend, this pest,
This household evil, this close-clinging fiend,
In rough terms to my wife. 'Death, my own servants
Controll'd above me ! orders countermanded !
What next ?

[Servant enters and announces the Sister

Enter Lucy.

Sister ! I know you are come to welcome
This day's return. 'Twas well done.

LUCY.

You seem ruffled.

In years gone by this day was used to be
The smoothest of the year. Your honey turn'd
So soon to gall ?

SELBY.

Gall'd am I, and with cause,

And rid to death, yet cannot get a riddance,
Nay, scarce a ride, by this proud Widow's leave.

LUCY.

Something you wrote me of a Mistress Frampton.

SELBY.

She came at first a meek admitted guest,
Pretending a short stay ; her whole deportment
Seem'd as of one obliged. A slender trunk,
The wardrobe of her scant and ancient clothing,
Bespoke no more. But in few days her dress,
Her looks, were proudly changed. And now she
 flaunts it

In jewels stolen or borrow'd from my wife ;
Who owes her some strange service, of what nature
I must be kept in ignorance. Katherine's meek
And gentle spirit cowers beneath her eye,
As spell-bound by some witch.

LUCY.

 Some mystery hangs on it.
How bears she in her carriage towards yourself ?

SELBY.

As one who fears, and yet not greatly cares
For my displeasure. Sometimes I have thought,
A secret glance would tell me she could love,
If I but gave encouragement. Before me
She keeps some moderation ; but is never
Closeted with my wife, but in the end
I find my Katherine in briny tears.
From the small chamber, where she first was lodged,
The gradual fiend by specious wriggling arts
Has now ensconced herself in the best part
Of this large mansion ; calls the left wing her own ;
Commands my servants, equipage.—I hear
Her hatred tread. What makes she back so soon ?

Enter MRS. FRAMPTON.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

O, I am jolter'd, bruised, and shook to death,
With your vile Wiltshire roads. The villain Philip
Chose, on my conscience, the perversest tracks,

And stoniest hard lanes in all the county,
Till I was fain get out, and so walk back,
My errand unperform'd at Andover.

LUCY.

And I shall love the knave for ever after. [Aside.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

A friend with you !

SELBY.

My eldest sister Lucy,
Come to congratulate this returning morn.—
Sister, my wife's friend, Mistress Frampton.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Pray,

Be seated. For your brother's sake, you are welcome.
I had thought this day to have spent in homely fashion
With the good couple, to whose hospitality
I stand so far indebted. But your coming
Makes it a feast.

LUCY.

She does the honours naturally——

[Aside.

SELBY.

As if she were the mistress of the house—— [*Aside.*]

MRS. FRAMPTON.

I love to be at home with loving friends.
To stand on ceremony with obligations,
Is to restrain the obliger. That old coach, though,
Of yours jumbles one strangely.

SELBY.

I shall order

An equipage soon, more easy to you, madam——

LUCY.

To drive her and her pride to Lucifer,

I hope he means. [*Aside.*]

MRS. FRAMPTON.

I must go trim myself; this humbled garb
Would shame a wedding feast. I have your leave
For a short absence?—and your Katherine——

SELBY.

You'll find her in her closet——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Fare you well, then. [*Exit.*]

SELBY.

How like you her assurance ?

LUCY.

Even so well,

That if this Widow were my guest, not yours,
She should have coach enough, and scope to ride.
My merry groom should in a trice convey her
To Sarum Plain, and set her down at Stonehenge,
To pick her path through those antiques at leisure ;
She should take sample of our Wiltshire flints.
O, be not lightly jealous ! nor surmise,
That to a wanton bold-faced thing like this
Your modest shrinking Katherine could impart
Secrets of any worth, especially
Secrets that touch'd your peace. If there be aught,
My life upon't, 'tis but some girlish story
Of a First Love ; which even the boldest wife
Might modestly deny to a husband's ear,
Much more your timid and too sensitive Katherine.

H

SELBY.

I think it is no more; and will dismiss
My further fears, if ever I have had such.

LUCY.

Shall we go walk? I'd see your gardens, brother;
And how the new trees thrive, I recommended.
Your Katherine is engaged now——

SELBY.

I'll attend you.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE—*Servants' Hall.*

HOUSEKEEPER, PHILIP, AND OTHERS, *laughing.*

HOUSEKEEPER.

OUR Lady's guest, since her short ride, seems ruffled,
And somewhat in disorder. Philip, Philip,
I do suspect some roguery. Your mad tricks
Will some day cost you a good place, I warrant.

PHILIP.

Good Mistress Jane, our serious housekeeper,
And sage Duenna to the maids and scullions,
We must have leave to laugh ; our brains are younger,
And undisturb'd with care of keys and pantries.
We are wild things.

BUTLER.

Good Philip, tell us all.

ALL.

Ay, as you live, tell, tell——

PHILIP.

Mad fellows, you shall have it.

The Widow's bell rang lustily and loud——

BUTLER.

I think that no one can mistake her ringing.

WAITING-MAID.

Our Lady's ring is soft sweet music to it,

More of entreaty hath it than command.

PHILIP.

I lose my story, if you interrupt me thus.

The bell, I say, rang fiercely; and a voice

More shrill than bell, call'd out for "Coachman Philip."

I straight obey'd, as 'tis my name and office.

"Drive me," quoth she, "to the next market town,

Where I have hope of letters." I made haste.

Put to the horses, saw her fairly coach'd,

And drove her——

WAITING-MAID.

—By the strait high road to Andover,
I guess—

PHILIP.

Pray, warrant things within your knowledge,
Good Mistress Abigail ; look to your dressings,
And leave the skill in horses to the coachman.

BUTLER.

He'll have his humour ; best not interrupt him.

PHILIP.

'Tis market-day, thought I ; and the poor beasts,
Meeting such droves of cattle and of people,
May take a fright ; so down the lane I trundled,
Where Goodman Dobson's crazy mare was founder'd,
And where the flints were biggest, and ruts widest,
By ups and downs, and such bone-cracking motions,
We flounder'd on a furlong, till my madam,
In policy, to save the few joints left her,
Betook her to her feet, and there we parted.

ALL.

Ha ! ha ! ha !

BUTLER.

Hang her, 'tis pity such as she should ride.

WAITING-MAID.

I think she is a witch ; I have tired myself out
With sticking pins in her pillow ; still she 'scapes them—

BUTLER.

And I with helping her to mum for claret,
But never yet could cheat her dainty palate.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Well, well, she is the guest of our good Mistress,
And so should be respected. Though, I think,
Our Master cares not for her company,
He would ill brook we should express so much,
By rude discourtesies, and short attendance,
Being but servants. (*A bell rings furiously.*) 'Tis her
bell speaks now ;
Good, good, bestir yourselves : who knows who's
wanted ?

BUTLER.

But 'twas a merry trick of Philip coachman.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE—*Mrs. Selby's Chamber.*

MRS. FRAMPTON, KATHERINE, *working.*

MRS. FRAMPTON.

I AM thinking, child, how contrary our fates
Have traced our lots through life. Another needle,
This works untowardly. An heiress born
To splendid prospects, at our common school
I was as one above you all, not of you ;
Had my distinct prerogatives ; my freedoms,
Denied to you. Pray, listen——

KATHERINE.

I must hear,
What you are pleased to speak !—How my heart sinks
here !

[*Aside.*

MRS. FRAMPTON.

My chamber to myself, my separate maid,
My coach, and so forth.—Not that needle, simple one,
With the great staring eye fit for a Cyclops !
Mine own are not so blinded with their griefs,
But I could make a shift to thread a smaller.
A cable or a camel might go through this,
And never strain for the passage.

KATHERINE.

I will fit you.

Intolerable tyranny !

[*Aside.*

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Quick, quick ;

You were not once so slack.—As I was saying,
Not a young thing among ye, but observed me
Above the mistress. Who but I was sought to
In all your dangers, all your little difficulties,
Your girlish scrapes ? I was the scape-goat still,
To fetch you off ; kept all your secrets, some,
Perhaps, since then——

KATHERINE.

No more of that, for mercy,
If you'd not have me, sinking at your feet,
Cleave the cold earth for comfort. [Kneels.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

This to me ?

This posture to your friend had better suited
The orphan Katherine in her humble school-days
To the *then* rich heiress, than the wife of Selby,
Of wealthy Mr. Selby,
To the poor widow Frampton, sunk as she is.
Come, come,
'Twas something, or 'twas nothing, that I said ;
I did not mean to fright you, sweetest bed-fellow !
You once were so, but Selby now engrosses you.
I'll make him give you up a night or so ;
In faith I will : that we may lie, and talk
Old tricks of school-days over.

KATHERINE.

Hear me, madam——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Not by that name. Your friend——

KATHERINE.

My truest friend,

And saviour of my honour !

MRS. FRAMPTON.

This sounds better ;

You still shall find me such.

KATHERINE.


That you have graced

Our poor house with your presence hitherto,
Has been my greatest comfort, the sole solace
Of my forlorn and hardly guess'd estate.

You have been pleased
To accept some trivial hospitalities,
In part of payment of a long arrear
I owe to you, no less than for my life.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

You speak my services too large.



KATHERINE.

Nay, less ;

For what an abject thing were life to me
Without your silence on my dreadful secret !
And I would wish the league we have renew'd
Might be perpetual—

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Have a care, fine madam ! [*Aside.*]

KATHERINE.

That one house still might hold us. But my husband
Has shown himself of late——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

How, Mistress Selby ?

KATHERINE.

Not, not impatient. You misconstrue him.
He honours, and he loves, nay, he must love
The friend of his wife's youth. But there are moods,
In which——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

I understand you ;—in which husbands,

And wives that love, may wish to be alone,
To nurse the tender fits of new-born dalliance,
After a five years' wedlock.

KATHERINE.

Was that well,
Or charitably put ? do these pale cheeks
Proclaim a wanton blood ? this wasting form
Seem a fit theatre for Levity
To play his love-tricks on ; and act such follies,
As even in Affection's first bland Moon
Have less of grace than pardon in best wedlocks ?
I was about to say, that there are times,
When the most frank and sociable man
May surfeit on most loved society,
Preferring liveness rather——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

To my company——

KATHERINE.

Ay, your's, or mine, or any one's. Nay, take
Not this unto yourself. Even in the newness

Of our first married loves 'twas sometimes so.
For solitude, I have heard my Selby say,
Is to the mind as rest to the corporal functions ;
And he would call it oft, the *day's soft sleep*.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

What is your drift ? and whereto tends this speech,
Rhetorically labour'd ?

KATHERINE.

That you would
Abstain but from our house a month, a week ;
I make request but for a single day.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

A month, a week, a day ! A single hour
Is every week, and month, and the long year,
And all the years to come ! My footing here,
Slipt once, recovers never. From the state
Of gilded roofs, attendance, luxuries,
Parks, gardens, sauntering walks, or wholesome rides,
To the bare cottage on the withering moor,
Where I myself am servant to myself,

Or only waited on by blackest thoughts—

I sink, if this be so. No ; here I sit.

KATHERINE.

Then I am lost for ever !

[Sinks at her feet—curtain drops]

SCENE—*An Apartment, contiguous to the last.*

SELBY, *as if listening.*

SELBY.

The sounds have died away. What am I changed to ?
What do I here, list'ning like to an abject,
Or heartless wittol, that must hear no good,
If he hear aught ? "This shall to the ear of your
husband."

It was the Widow's word. I guess'd some mystery,
And the solution with a vengeance comes.
What can my wife have left untold to me,
That must be told by proxy ? I begin
To call in doubt the course of her life past

Under my very eyes. She hath not been good,
Not virtuous, not discreet ; she hath not outrun
My wishes still with prompt and meek observance.
Perhaps she is not fair, sweet-voiced ; her eyes
Not like the dove's ; all this as well may be,
As that she should entreasure up a secret
In the peculiar closet of her breast,
And grudge it to my ear. It is my right
To claim the halves in any truth she owns,
As much as in the babe I have by her ;
Upon whose face henceforth I fear to look,
Lest I should fancy in its innocent brow
Some strange shame written.

Enter Lucy.

Sister, an anxious word with you.
From out the chamber, where my wife but now
Held talk with her encroaching friend, I heard
(Not of set purpose hark'ning, but by chance)
A voice of chiding, answer'd by a tone

Of replication, such as the meek dove
Makes, when the kite has clutch'd her. The high Widow
Was loud and stormy. I distinctly heard
One threat pronounced—"Your husband shall know
all."

I am no listener, sister ; and I hold
A secret, got by such unmanly shift,
The pitiful'st of thefts ; but what mine ear,
I not intending it, receives perforce,
I count my lawful prize. Some subtle meaning
Lurks in this fiend's behaviour ; which, by force ;
Or fraud, I must make mine.

LUCY.

The gentlest means
Are still the wisest. What, if you should press
Your wife to a disclosure ?

SELBY.

I have tried
All gentler means ; thrown out low hints, which, though
Merely suggestions still, have never fail'd

To blanch her cheek with fears. Roughlier to insist,
Would be to kill, where I but meant to heal.

LUCY.

Your own description gave that Widow out
As one not much precise, nor over coy,
And nice to listen to a suit of love.
What if you feign'd a courtship, putting on,
(To work the secret from her easy faith,)
For honest ends, a most dishonest seeming ?

SELBY.

I see your drift, and partly meet your counsel.
But must it not in me appear prodigious,
To say the least, unnatural, and suspicious,
To move hot love, where I have shewn cool scorn,
And undissembled looks of blank aversion ?

LUCY.

Vain woman is the dupe of her own charms,
And easily credits the resistless power,
That in besieging Beauty lies, to cast down
The slight-built fortress of a casual hate.

SELBY.

I am resolved——

LUCY.

Success attend your wooing!

SELBY.

And I'll about it roundly, my wise sister.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE—*The Library.*

MR. SELBY, MRS. FRAMPTON.

SELBY.

A fortunate encounter, Mistress Frampton.
My purpose was, if you can spare so much
From your sweet leisure, a few words in private.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

What mean his alter'd tones ? These looks to me,
Whose glances yet he has repell'd with coolness ?
Is the wind changed ? I'll veer about with it,
And meet him in all fashions. [Aside.

All my leisure,
Feebly bestow'd upon my kind friends here,

Would not express a tithe of the obligations
I every hour incur.

SELBY.

No more of that.—

I know not why, my wife hath lost of late
Much of her cheerful spirits.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

It was my topic
To-day ; and every day, and all day long,
I still am chiding with her. “Child,” I said,
And said it pretty roundly—it may be
I was too peremptory—we elder school-fellows,
Presuming on the advantage of a year
Or two, which, in that tender time, seem'd much,
In after years, much like to elder sisters,
Are prone to keep the authoritative style,
When time has made the difference most ridiculous—

SELBY.

The observation's shrewd.

Mrs. FRAMPTON.

"Child," I was saying,
"If some wives had obtained a lot like yours,"
And then perhaps I sigh'd, "they would not sit
In corners moping, like to sullen moppets,
That want their will, but dry their eyes, and look
Their cheerful husbands in the face," perhaps
I said, their Selby's, "with proportion'd looks
Of honest joy."

SELBY.

You do suspect no jealousy?

Mrs. FRAMPTON.

What is his import? Whereto tends his speech? [*Aside*
Of whom, or what, should she be jealous, sir?

SELBY.

I do not know, but women have their fancies;
And underneath a cold indifference,
Or show of some distaste, husbands have mask'd
A growing fondness for a female friend,

Which the wife's eye was sharp enough to see,

Before the friend had wit to find it out.

You do not quit us soon ?

MRS. FRAMPTON.

'Tis as I find

Your Katherine profits by my lessons, sir.—

Means this man honest ? Is there no deceit ? [*Aside.*

SELBY.

She cannot chuse.—Well, well, I have been
thinking,

And if the matter were to do again——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

What matter, sir ?

SELBY.

This idle bond of wedlock ;

These sour-sweet briars, fetters of harsh silk ;

I might have made, I do not say a better,

But a more fit choice in a wife.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

The parch'd ground,

In hottest Julys, drinks not in the showers
More greedily, than I his words ! [Aside.

SELBY.

My humour
Is to be frank and jovial ; and that man
Affects me best, who most reflects me in
My most free temper.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Were you free to chuse,
As jestingly I'll put the supposition,
Without a thought reflecting on your Katherine,
What sort of woman would you make your choice ?

SELBY.

I like your humour, and will meet your jest.
She should be one about my Katherine's age ;
But not so old, by some ten years, in gravity.
One that would meet my mirth, sometimes outrun it ;
No puling, pining moppet, as you said,
Nor moping maid, that I must still be teaching
The freedoms of a wife all her life after :

But one, that, having worn the chain before,
 (And worn it lightly, as report gave out,)
 Enfranchised from it by her poor fool's death,
 Took it not so to heart that I need dread
 To die myself, for fear a second time
 To wet a widow's eye.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Some widows, sir,
 Hearing you talk so wildly, would be apt
 To put strange misconstruction on your words,
 As aiming at a Turkish liberty,
 Where the free husband hath his several mates,
 His Penseroso, his Allegro wife,
 To suit his sober, or his frolic fit.

SELY.

How judge you of that latitude ?

MRS. FRAMPTON.

As one.

In European customs we must judge
 Been born a native of the desert ;

I might have thought as they do. Yet I knew
A married man that took a second wife,
And (the man's circumstances duly weigh'd,
With all their bearings) the considerate world
Nor much approved, nor much condemn'd the deed.

SELBY.

You move my wonder strangely. Pray, proceed.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

An eye of wanton liking he had placed
Upon a Widow, who liked him again,
But stood on terms of honourable love,
And scrupled wronging his most virtuous wife—
When to their ears a lucky rumour ran,
That this demure and saintly-seeming wife
Had a first husband living ; with the which
Being question'd, she but faintly could deny.
“ A priest indeed there was ; some words had past,
But scarce amounting to a marriage rite.
Her friend was absent ; she supposed him dead ;
And, seven years parted, both were free to chuse.”

SELBY.

What did the indignant husband ? Did he not
With violent handlings stigmatize the cheek
Of the deceiving wife, who had entail'd
Shame on their innocent babe ?

MRS. FRAMPTON.

He neither tore
His wife's locks nor his own ; but wisely weighing
His own offence with her's in equal poise,
And woman's weakness 'gainst the strength of man,
Came to a calm and witty compromise.
He coolly took his gay-faced widow home,
Made her his second wife ; and still the first
Lost few or none of her prerogatives.
The servants call'd her mistress still ; she kept
The keys, and had the total ordering
Of the house affairs ; and, some slight toys excepted,
Was all a moderate wife would wish to be.

SELBY.

A tale full of dramatic incident !—

•
And if a man should put it in a play,
How should he name the parties ?

MRS. FRAMPTON.

The man's name
Through time I have forgot—the widow's too ;—
But his first wife's first name, her maiden one,
Was—not unlike to *that* your Katherine bore,
Before she took the honour'd style of Selby.

SELBY.

A dangerous meaning in your riddle lurks.
One knot is yet unsolved ; that told, this strange
And most mysterious drama ends. The name
Of that first husband——

Enter LUCY.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Sir, your pardon—
The allegory fits your private ear.
Some half hour hence, in the garden's secret walk,
We shall have leisure. [Exit

SELBY.

Sister, whence come you ?

LUCY.

From your poor Katherine's chamber, where she droops
In sad presageful thoughts, and sighs, and weeps,
And seems to pray by turns. At times she looks
As she would pour her secret in my bosom—
Then starts, as I have seen her, at the mention
Of some immodest act. At her request,
I left her on her knees.

SELBY.

The fittest posture ;

For great has been her fault to Heaven and me.
She married me, with a first husband living,
Or not known not to be so, which, in the judgment
Of any but indifferent honesty,
Must be esteem'd the same. The shallow Widow,
Caught by my art, under a riddling veil
Too thin to hide her meaning, hath confess'd all.
Your coming in broke off the conference,

When she was ripe to tell the fatal *name*,
That seals my wedded doom.

LUCY.

Was she so forward
To pour her hateful meanings in your ear
At the first hint ?

SELBY.

Her newly flatter'd hopes
Array'd themselves at first in forms of doubt ;
And with a female caution she stood off
Awhile, to read the meaning of my suit,
Which with such honest seeming I enforced,
That her cold scruples soon gave way ; and now
She rests prepared, as mistress, or as wife,
To seize the place of her betrayed friend—
My much offending, but more suffering, Katherine.

LUCY.

Into what labyrinth of fearful shapes
My simple project has conducted you—
Were but my wit as skilful to invent

A clue to lead you forth !—I call to mind
A letter, which your wife received from the Cape,
Soon after you were married, with some circumstances
Of mystery too.

SELBY.

I well remember it.

That letter did confirm the truth.(she said)
Of a friend's death, which she had long fear'd true,
But knew not for a fact. A youth of promise
She gave him out—a hot adventurous spirit—
That had set sail in quest of golden dreams,
And cities in the heart of Central Afric ;
But named no names, nor did I care to press
My question further, in the passionate grief
She shew'd at the receipt. Might this be he ?

LUCY.

Tears were not all. When that first shower was
past,
With clasped hands she raised her eyes to Heav'n,
As if in thankfulness for some escape,

Or strange deliverance, in the news implied,
Which sweeten'd that sad news.

SELBY.

Something of that

I noted also——

LUCY.

In her closet once,

Seeking some other trifle, I espied
A ring, in mournful characters deciphering
The death of "Robert Halford, aged two
And twenty." Brother, I am not given
To the confident use of wagers, which I hold
Unseemly in a woman's argument;
But I am strangely tempted now to risk
A thousand pounds out of my patrimony,
(And let my future husband look to it,
If it be lost,) that this immodest Widow
Shall name the name that tallies with that ring.

SELBY.

That wager lost, I should be rich indeed—

Rich in my rescued Kate—rich in my honour,
Which now was bankrupt. Sister, I accept
Your merry wager, with an aching heart
For very fear of winning. 'Tis the hour
That I should meet my Widow in the walk,
The south side of the garden. On some pretence
Lure forth my Wife that way, that she may witness
Our seeming courtship. Keep us still in sight,
Yourselves unseen; and by some sign I'll give,
(A finger held up, or a kerchief waved,)
You'll know your wager won—then break upon us,
As if by chance.

LUCY.

I apprehend your meaning——

SELBY.

And may you prove a true Cassandra here,
Though my poor acres smart for't, wagering sister.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE—*Mrs. Selby's Chamber.*

MRS. FRAMPTON—KATHERINE.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Did I express myself in terms so strong ?

KATHERINE.

As nothing could have more affrighted me.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Think it a hurt friend's jest, in retribution

Of a suspected cooling hospitality.

And, for my staying here, or going hence,

(Now I remember something of our argument,)

Selby and I can settle that between us.

You look amazed. What if your husband, child,

Himself has courted me to stay ?

KATHERINE.

You move

My wonder and my pleasure equally.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Yes, courted me to stay, wav'd all objections,
Made it a favour to yourselves ; not me,
His troublesome guest, as you surmised. Child, child,
When I recall his flattering welcome, I
Begin to think the burden of my presence
Was——

KATHERINE.

What, for Heaven——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

A little, little spice
Of jealousy—that's all—an honest pretext,
No wife need blush for. Say that you should see,
(As oftentimes we widows take such freedoms,
Yet still on this side virtue,) in a jest
Your husband pat me on the cheek, or steal
A kiss, while you were by,—not else, for virtue's sake.

KATHERINE.

I could endure all this, thinking my husband
Meant it in sport——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

But if in downright earnest
(Putting myself out of the question here)
Your Selby, as I partly do suspect,
Own'd a divided heart——

KATHERINE.

My own would break——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Why, what a blind and witless fool it is,
That will not see its gains, its infinite gains——

KATHERINE.

Gain in a loss,

Or mirth in utter desolation !

MRS. FRAMPTON.

He doting on a face—suppose it mine,
Or any other's tolerably fair—
What need you care about a senseless secret ?

KATHERINE.

Perplex'd and fearful woman ! I in part
Fathom your dangerous meaning. You have broke
The worse than iron band, fretting the soul,
By which you held me captive. Whether my husband
Is what you gave him out, or your fool'd fancy
But dreams he is so, either way I am free.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

It talks it bravely, blazons out its shame ;
A very heroine while on its knees ;
Rowe's Penitent, an absolute Calista !

KATHERINE.

Not to thy wretched self these tears are falling ;
But to my husband, and offended heaven,
Some drops are due—and then I sleep in peace,
Reliev'd from frightful dreams, my dreams though sad.

[*Exit.*

MRS. FRAMPTON.

I have gone too far. Who knows but in this mood
She may forestall my story, win on Selby

By a frank confession ?—and the time draws on
For our appointed meeting. The game's desperate,
For which I play. A moment's difference
May make it her's or mine. I fly to meet him.

[*Exit.*

SCENE—A Garden.

Mrs. SELBY—Mrs. FRANKLIN.

SELBY.

I am not so ill a guesser. Mrs. FRANKLIN.

Not to conjecture, that ~~some~~ ~~manages~~

In your unfinished story, ~~regularly~~ ~~introduced~~.

Glanced at my ~~husband's~~ ~~peace~~

~~For once we see~~

Mrs. FRANKLIN.

Even from her earliest ~~school days~~—~~Was it that~~

Or how is she concerned in ~~my~~ ~~fine~~ ~~travels~~

Framed for the hour's ~~amusement~~?

SELBY.

By my *hopes*

Of my new interest conceived in you,
And by the honest passion of my heart,
Which not obliquely I to you did hint ;
Come from the clouds of misty allegory,
And in plain language let me hear the worst.
Stand I disgraced, or no ?

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Then, by *my* hopes

Of my new interest conceiv'd in you,
And by the kindling passion in *my* breast,
Which through my riddles you had almost read,
Adjured so strongly, I will tell you all.
In her school years, then bordering on fifteen,
Or haply not much past, she loved a youth——

SELBY.

My most ingenuous Widow——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Met him oft

By stealth, where I still of the party was——

SILENCE.

Prime confidence in all the school, I warrant,

And general go-between——

[Aside.]

MRS. FRAMPTON.

[One hour is past.]

In breathless haste. "The ship was under sail,

Or in few hours would be that must convey

Him and his destinies to distant shores.

Where, should he perish by mysterious cause.

It would be consolation in his death

To have call'd his Katherine his."

SILENCE.

Thus far the story

Tallies with what I hoped.

[Aside.]

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Wavering between

The doubt of doing wrong, and losing him ;

And my dissuasions not o'er hotly urged,

Whom he had flatter'd with the bride-maid's part ;—

SELBY.

By my *hopes*

Of my new interest conceived in you,
And by the honest passion of my heart,
Which not obliquely I to you did hint ;
Come from the clouds of misty allegory,
And in plain language let me hear the worst.
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And by the kindling passion in *my* breast,
Which through my riddles you had almost read,
Adjured so strongly, I will tell you all.
In her school years, then bordering on fifteen,
Or haply not much past, she loved a youth——

SELBY.

My most ingenuous Widow——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Met him oft

By stealth, where I still of the party was——

SELBY.

Prime confidant to all the school, I warrant,
And general go-between——

[*Aside.*

MRS. FRAMPTON.

One morn he came
In breathless haste. “The ship was under sail,
Or in few hours would be, that must convey
Him and his destinies to barbarous shores,
Where, should he perish by inglorious hands,
It would be consolation in his death
To have call'd his Katherine *his*.”

SELBY.

Thus far the story
Tallies with what I hoped. [*Aside.*

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Wavering between
The doubt of doing wrong, and losing him ;
And my dissuasions not o'er hotly urged,
Whom he had flatter'd with the bride-maid's part ;—

SELBY.

I owe my subtle Widow, then, for this.

[*Aside.*

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Briefly, we went to church. The ceremony
Scarcely was huddled over, and the ring
Yet cold upon her finger, when they parted—
He to his ship; and we to school got back,
Scarce miss'd, before the dinner-bell could ring.

SELBY.

And from that hour——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Nor sight, nor news of him,
For aught that I could hear, she e'er obtain'd.

SELBY.

Like to a man that hovers in suspense
Over a letter just receiv'd, on which
The black seal hath impress'd its ominous token,
Whether to open it or no, so I
Suspended stand, whether to press my fate

Further, or check ill curiosity,
That tempts me to more loss.—The name, the name
Of this fine youth ?

MRS. FRAMPTON.

What boots it, if 'twere told ?

SELBY.

Now, by our loves,
And by my hopes of happier wedlocks, some day
To be accomplish'd, give me his name !

MRS. FRAMPTON.

'Tis no such serious matter. It was—Huntingdon.

SELBY.

How have three little syllables pluck'd from me
A world of countless hopes !— [Aside.

Evasive Widow.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

How, sir ! I like not this. [Aside.

SELBY.

No, no, I meant
Nothing but good to thee. That other woman,

How shall I call her but evasive, false,
And treacherous ?—by the trust I place in thee,
Tell me, and tell me truly, was the name
As you pronounced it ?

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Huntingdon—the name,
Which his paternal grandfather assumed,
Together with the estates, of a remote
Kinsman : but our high-spirited youth——

SELBY.

Yes——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Disdaining
For sordid pelf to truck the family honours,
At risk of the lost estates, resumed the old style,
And answer'd only to the name of——

SELBY.

What——

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Of Halford——

SELBY.

A Huntington to Halford changed so soon !
Why, then I see, a witch hath her good spells,
As well as bad, and can by a backward charm
Unruffle the foul storm she has just been raising. [*Aside.*

[*He makes the signal.*

My frank, fair spoken Widow ! let this kiss,
Which yet aspires no higher, speak my thanks,
Till I can think on greater.

Enter LUCY and KATHERINE.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Interrupted !

SELBY.

My sister here ! and see, where with her comes
My serpent gliding in an angel's form,
To taint the new-born Eden of our joys.
Why should we fear them ? We'll not stir a foot,
Nor coy it for their pleasures.

[*He courts the Widow.*

LUCY (*to Katherine*).

This your free,
And sweet ingenuous confession, binds me
For ever to you ; and it shall go hard,
But it shall fetch you back your husband's heart,
That now seems blindly straying ; or at worst,
In me you have still a sister.—Some wives, brother,
Would think it strange, to catch their husbands thus
Alone with a trim widow ; but your Katherine
Is arm'd, I think, with patience.

KATHERINE.

I am fortified
With knowledge of self-faults to endure worse wrongs,
If they be wrongs, than he can lay upon me ;
Even to look on, and see him sue in earnest,
As now I think he does it but in seeming,
To that ill woman.

SELBY.

Good words, gentle Kate,
And not a thought irreverent of our Widow.

Why, 'twere unmannerly at any time,
But most uncourteous on our wedding day,
When we should shew most hospitable.—Some wine.

[*Wine is brought.*]

I am for sports. And now I do remember,
The old Egyptians at their banquets placed
A charnel sight of dead men's skulls before them,
With images of cold mortality,
To temper their fierce joys when they grew rampant.
I like the custom well : and ere we crown
With freer mirth the day, I shall propose,
In calmest recollection of our spirits,
We drink the solemn 'Memory of the dead'—

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Or the supposed dead— [Aside to him.

SELBY.

Pledge me, good wife—

[*She fills.*]

Nay, higher yet, till the brimm'd cup swell o'er.

KATHERINE.

I catch the awful import of your words ;

And, though I could accuse you of unkindness,
Yet as your lawful and obedient wife,
While that name lasts (as I perceive it fading,
Nor I much longer may have leave to use it)
I calmly take the office you impose ;
And on my knees, imploring their forgiveness,
Whom I in heav'n or earth may have offended,
Exempt from starting tears, and woman's weakness,
I pledge you, sir—The Memory of the Dead !

[She drinks kneeling.

SELBY.

'Tis gently and discreetly said, and like
My former loving Kate.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Does he relent ?

[Aside.

SELBY.

That ceremony past, we give the day
To unabated sport. And, in requital
Of certain stories, and quaint allegories,
Which my rare Widow hath been telling to me
To raise my morning mirth, if she will lend

Her patient hearing, I will here recite
A Parable ; and, the more to suit her taste,
The scene is laid in the East.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

I long to hear it.

Some tale, to fit his wife. [*Aside.*

KATHERINE.

Now, comes my TRIAL.

LUCY.

The hour of your deliverance is at hand,
If I presage right. Bear up, gentlest sister.

SELBY.

“The Sultan Haroun”—Stay—O now I have it—
“The Caliph Haroun in his orchards had
A fruit-tree, bearing such delicious fruits,
That he reserved them for his proper gust ;
And through the Palace it was Death proclaim’d
To any one that should purloin the same.”

MRS. FRAMPTON.

A heavy penance for so light a fault—

SELBY.

Pray you, be silent, else you put me out.
“ A crafty page, that for advantage watch'd,
Detected in the act a brother page,
Of his own years, that was his bosom friend ;
And thenceforth he became that other's lord,
And like a tyrant he demean'd himself,
Laid forced exactions on his fellow's purse ;
And when that poor means fail'd, held o'er his head
Threats of impending death in hideous forms ;
Till the small culprit on his nightly couch
Dream'd of strange pains, and felt his body writhe
In tortuous pangs around the impaling stake.”

Mrs. FRAMPTON.

I like not this beginning—

SELBY.

Pray you, attend.

“ The Secret, like a night-hag, rid his sleeps,
And took the youthful pleasures from his days,
And chased the youthful smoothness from his brow,

That from a rose-cheek'd boy he waned and waned
To a pale skeleton of what he was ;
And would have died, but for one lucky chance."

KATHERINE.

Oh !

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Your wife—she faints—some cordial—smell to this.

SELBY.

Stand off. My sister best will do that office.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

Are all his tempting speeches come to this ? (*Aside.*

SELBY.

What ail'd my wife ?

KATHERINE.

A warning faintness, sir,
Seized on my spirits, when you came to where
You said "a lucky chance." I am better now,
Please you go on.

SELBY.

The sequel shall be brief.

KATHERINE.

But, brief or long, I feel my fate hangs on it.

[*Aside.*

SELBY.

“ One morn the Caliph, in a covert hid,
Close by an arbour where the two boys talk’d,
(As oft, we read, that Eastern sovereigns
Would play the eaves-dropper, to learn the truth,
Imperfectly received from mouths of slaves,)
O’rheard their dialogue ; and heard enough
To judge aright the cause, and know his cue.
The following day a Cadi was dispatched
To summon both before the judgment seat ;
The lickerish culprit, almost dead with fear,
And the informing friend, who readily,
Fired with fair promises of large reward,
And Caliph’s love, the hateful truth disclosed.”

MRS. FRAMPTON.

What did the Caliph to the offending boy,
That had so grossly err’d ?

SELBY.

His sceptred hand
He forth in token of forgiveness stretch'd,
And clapp'd his cheeks, and courted him with gifts,
And he became once more his favourite page.

MRS. FRAMPTON.

But for that other—

SELBY.

He dismiss'd him straight,
From dreams of grandeur, and of Caliph's love,
To the bare cottage on the withering moor,
Where friends, turn'd fiends, and hollow confidants,
And widows, hide, who, in a husband's ear
Pour baneful truths, but tell not all the truth;
And told him not that Robin Halford died
Some moons before *his* marriage-bells were rung.
Too near dishonour hast thou trod, dear wife,
And on a dangerous cast our fates were set;
But Heav'n, that will'd our wedlock to be blest,
Hath interposed to save it gracious too.

Your penance is—to dress your cheek in smiles,
And to be once again my merry Kate.—
Sister, your hand.
Your wager won makes me a happy man,
Though poorer, Heav'n knows, by a thousand pounds.
The sky clears up after a dubious day.
Widow, your hand. I read a penitence
In this dejected brow; and in this shame
Your fault is buried. You shall in with us,
And, if it please you, taste our nuptial fare :
For, till this moment, I can joyful say,
Was never truly Selby's Wedding Day.

FINIS.





